

# True Love

## Interactive Bible Study

What the Bible says about  
relationships and marriage

*Dr. Chris Richards & Dr. Liz Jones*



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**[www.lovewise.org.uk](http://www.lovewise.org.uk)**



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## INTRODUCTION

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It is notable that the Bible begins with a wedding (**Genesis 2:24**), ends with a wedding (**Revelation 19:9**) and Jesus starts his ministry at a wedding (**John 2:1-11**). This fact reminds us how important marriage and right sexual relationships are to the Lord.

There has been a great change in our culture's attitude to sex and marriage over the last fifty years. Marriage is, sadly, no longer considered to be the only right setting for sexual intimacy and young people are surrounded by sexual temptations. It is in this context that young people desperately need to gain confidence in the Bible and its teaching. This will help them to understand God's will in this area and counter pressure from our society to conform to its ways. To that end, we hope this study is a valuable teaching resource.

The first two studies address the meaning and characteristics of marriage, before the importance of sexual purity is discussed in the three subsequent studies. This emphasis on marriage in the early studies is intentional. Although you may be concerned about the temptations towards wrong sexual behaviour amongst your young people, we consider that young people will not fully understand the importance of sexual purity until they have understood the true nature and importance of the God-given context for sexual intimacy, which is marriage as God designed it.

## **USING THIS RESOURCE**

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This leader's handbook has been designed for use in conjunction with the student handbook. We recommend that, if possible, each member of the group has their own copy of the student handbook. This will help them to follow the study and allow them to make notes, some of which may be personal.

The pages of the leader's and student handbooks share the same layout. Questions, discussions and readings will be found on the same page in both handbooks. Suggested answers are only found in the leader's handbook and corresponding space is left in the student handbook for brief notes on each section.

Estimated timings have been allotted to each section to aid with keeping the study moving to its conclusion within a certain duration. The aim is that each study should take between 40 and 60 minutes (though the fifth study may take longer).

It is likely that certain topics will arise from the material covered in this resource that will require longer discussion. In order that the studies keep to time, we suggest that leaders acknowledge and note these topics with a view to discussing them in more detail on a separate occasion. We have included additional content at the end of this leader's handbook to help inform such discussions. It may even be beneficial to consider using this additional material as the basis for further separate studies.

## USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

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**Read.** Look up verses in the Bible.



**Discussions.** Your study leader will help.



**Watch the videos.** Browse to the URL shown or scan the QR code-block shown. Videos will play in all modern browsers.



**Facts and Statistics.** These will inform your discussions.



**Further study.** Optional further reading.



**Further discussion.** Optional discussions on related topics.

## **IN THIS STUDY WE AIM TO TEACH**

Estimated duration: **40 - 60 minutes.**

1. **There are two states: single and married.**
2. **The Bible assumes that single people are sexually inactive.**
3. **Some remain single to serve God in a special way.**
4. **God created marriage. His design involves the process of leaving parents, cleaving to one another and ‘becoming one flesh’, in that order.**
5. **Marriage is a public commitment based on vows or promises.**
6. **Co-habitation is wrong, distinct and deficient compared to marriage.**
7. **God’s Seventh Commandment is a protection for marriage.**
8. **Marriage promotes family stability.**

# 1. SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE



4-6 mins.

**Read 1 Corinthians 7:7-9.** What do these verses teach us about singleness and marriage (v7)?

*They are both gifts from God.*

What does the Bible assume about singleness (v9)?

*A single person is not sexually active.*



8-12 mins.

Is this different from how young people understand singleness in our society?

- *Singleness in society nowadays usually means that the person is not currently in a relationship, whereas Biblical singleness means a person is not married.*
- *In our current society it is considered acceptable for a person who is not married to be sexually active or to cohabit (live together).*
- *There is often the suggestion that a person who is not sexually active is likely to feel unfulfilled.*



**Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.** We all start off single; some remain single for a while, whereas some people remain single for life. What does the Bible say is good about singleness?

*That a person can be single-minded about serving God without the responsibility of a wife or husband and children.*



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Can you think of people who have done jobs or been in situations where being single has enabled them to serve God in a particular way?

*The young people may know someone personally who is serving or has served God effectively as a single person. You could mention people such as: Dr. Helen Roseveare, Rev. John Stott, Amy Carmichael or Gladys Aylward.*



**SEE FURTHER STUDY** (page 45).



2-4 mins.

**Read Genesis 2:18, Genesis 1:27-28, Ephesians 5:31-32.**

Why did God create marriage?

- *For loving companionship.*
- *To have children.*
- *As a picture of Christ's relationship with the church which is described as His bride.*



2-4 mins.

**Read Genesis 2:24.** What three aspects of marriage are mentioned in this verse? Note the order.

- *The husband and wife leave their parents.*
- *Unite their lives.*
- *Unite their bodies in sexual intimacy (one aspect of becoming 'one flesh').*



Marriage is a legal commitment based on promises (vows) made in public, usually in front of family and friends at the wedding ceremony.



2-4 mins.

**Read Malachi 2:14-16.** How does God view the promises (covenant) of marriage?

*These verses teach that God views the marriage promises as very important and does not want them to be broken. This is confirmed by what Jesus says in **Mark 10:6-9**. In the verses that follow Jesus speaks about divorce. It is important to acknowledge to the young people that divorce has sadly become much more common over the last 50 years.*



**FURTHER DISCUSSION NOTES ON DIVORCE** (pages 46-48)



6-9 mins.

VIDEO: THE MARRIAGE VOWS.

<http://lovewise.org.uk/true-love-videos/marriage-vows>



Listen carefully to the promises this couple make to each other when they get married.

What did the couple getting married promise to each other?

*Lifelong faithfulness in all circumstances. This means they will love and look after each other for the rest of their lives until one of them dies, whether they face easy or difficult circumstances, whether they become rich or poor, and whether they are healthy or sick.*

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5-8 mins.

Cohabitation (living together) means a couple sharing a home and being sexually intimate when they are not married. How is cohabitation different from marriage?

*(Be sensitive to the family situations represented in your youth group.)*

*Possible answers may include:*

- *they are going against God's command to keep sexual intimacy for marriage.*
- *they have not made public promises.*
- *they have not signed any legal documents.*
- *they do not have wedding rings.*
- *they do not share a surname.*
- *they would not have to get a divorce if they split up.*
- *they may feel less secure.*
- *they are free to walk away from the relationship; for example, if they find another partner or want to move away because of work etc.*

*Cohabiting couples have not made public promises or signed legal documents. Many cohabiting couples have not made a decision about their long term future. Getting married is a decision to make unconditional promises which will radically affect the way a couple views their relationship and how they behave.*

*The radical difference between cohabitation and marriage is shown by studies demonstrating that cohabiting relationships break up more frequently than marriages – see the study on page 15 for further discussion. Cohabitation unwittingly looks for, or tests for, failure or things that would be each person's "deal breaker". In contrast, marriage involves unconditional love and commitment, and therefore the couple are promising to work through difficulties together.*



2-4 mins.

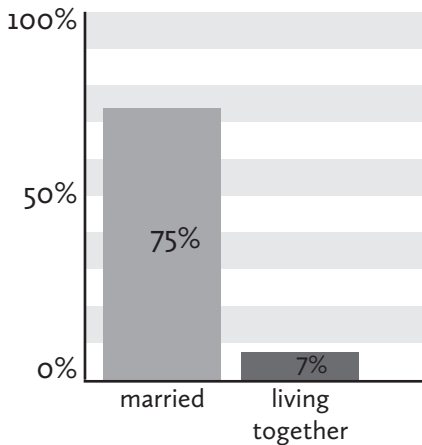
**Read Exodus 20:14.** How does this commandment relate to marriage?

*This commandment protects marriage.*



2-4 mins.

What does this graph show about marriage and cohabitation?



### Parents still together when their child reaches 16

*From Pronzato C., British Household Panel Survey Consolidated Marital, Cohabitation and Fertility Histories, 1991-2006. 2nd Edition. University of Essex. Institute for Social and Economic Research.*

*According to this study, by the time a child is 16, if the parents are married, there is a 75% chance that the parents will still be together. If the parents are living together and have never married, there is a 7% chance the parents will still be together. (Some of the married parents will have initially lived together and then got married.)*

*The graph therefore shows that being married made it more likely that the parents would remain together. The evidence from this study supports the goodness and wisdom of God's design of marriage.*



2-4 mins.

Some people say that marriage is “only a piece of paper”. Why is marriage more than a piece of paper?

“*It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but.... the marriage that sustains the love*”.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer | German theologian in the  
Second World War**

*Love is a feeling and feelings can change, but marriage is a commitment. The fact that a married couple have made legal promises in public and before God sustains the marriage through difficult times when the feelings of love might not be so strong.*